DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 989 RC 022 834

TITLE	A Demographic Profile of Pennsylvania's Rural Women.
INSTITUTION	Center for Rural Pennsylvania, Harrisburg.
PUB DATE	2000-12-00
NOTE	7p.; Research conducted by Gretchen Cornwell.
AVAILABLE FROM	Full text at Web site: http://www.ruralpa.org/RuralWomen2000.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Demography; *Educational Attainment; Employed Women; Employment Patterns; Feminization of Poverty; Income; One Parent Family; *Rural Urban Differences; *Rural Women; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS	*Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania has the largest rural population in the nation, and more than 50 percent of this population is female. Overall, Pennsylvania's rural women are doing well in education, family life stability, and health, relative to comparison groups of rural men and urban women and men. Educational attainment is greater among urban women and men, but less among rural men. Rural men are less likely to complete high school than rural women. About 65 percent of rural graduating seniors plan to continue their education, compared to about 74 percent of urban students. More rural females intend to obtain postsecondary education than rural males. Rural women are more likely to be married than any other comparison group, and there are fewer rural female-headed households than urban female-headed households. Birth, death, and breast cancer rates are lower for rural women than urban women. Specialized health care is limited in some counties. Women, particularly rural women, are much less likely to be arrested for a crime than men. Rural women are not faring as well economically as the comparison groups. Employment rates are slightly higher for urban men and women, and more urban workers are in executive, managerial, and professional specialty jobs than rural workers. Rural women are much more likely than any other group to live in a household with an income of less than twice the poverty threshold. In many rural counties, women's entrance into the labor force could be constrained by the lack of child care. (TD)

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ED 450 989

THE CENTER FOR

Rural Pennsylvania

A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

December 2000

A Demographic Profile of Pennsylvania's Rural Women

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A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S RURAL WOMEN

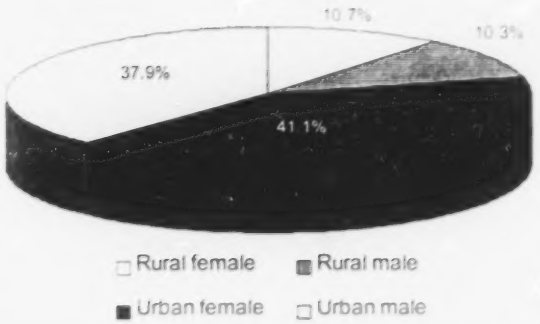
Pennsylvania has the largest rural population in the nation, and more than 50 percent of this population is female. Since very little was known about our state's female rural population, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania initiated research, conducted by Gretchen Cornwell of Penn State University, that would gather basic information about and provide a clearer picture of who they are.

Overall, the research suggests that the state's rural women are doing well in the areas of education, family life stability, and health, relative to the comparison groups of rural men and urban women and men. On the other hand, the results also indicate that rural women are not faring as well economically as the comparison groups.

POPULATION

In 2000, the population in the state's predominantly rural counties was projected to be about 2.56 million. More than 50 percent of this population is female.

Pennsylvania's Projected Population in 2000



MARITAL STATUS

More than 55 percent of rural women are married, almost 12 percent are widowed and more than 12 percent are divorced or separated. Rural women are more likely to be currently married, than any other of the comparison groups.

Marital Status for Pennsylvanians 15 Years and Older

Rural	Female	Male
Married	55.4%	53.4%
Widowed	11.9	2.4
Divorced/Separated	12.1	8.6
Never Married	20.5	35.5
Urban		
Married	50.2	54.1
Widowed	11.1	3.1
Divorced/Separated	10.8	8.2
Never Married	27.9	34.6

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

About 20 percent of rural women live in a female-headed household. The same is true for a slightly higher percentage of urban women (21.7 percent). Approximately 50 percent of the state's married-couple households include dependent children, compared to about 30 percent of rural female-headed households and 25 percent of urban female-headed households.
More than 25 percent of rural women live alone, and many of these women are 65 years old and older. Almost 33 percent of urban women live alone. Rural and urban men are less likely to live alone.

Population Projections for Rural and Urban Pennsylvania 2000

	Rural				Urban			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
Age	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-4	73,306	5.6	77,200	6.1	291,154	5.8	302,971	6.5
5-19	260,102	19.9	274,944	21.8	980,523	19.5	1,012,031	21.8
20-64	724,369	55.5	742,036	58.9	2,844,523	55.5	2,750,631	59.3
65+	247,065	19.0	165,420	13.1	919,877	18.3	575,336	12.4
Totals	1,304,842	100.0	1,259,600	100.0	5,036,077	100.0	4,640,969	100.0

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

LABOR FORCE

Fifty-five percent of rural women who are 15 years old and older are in the labor force compared to 69 percent of rural men. Almost 66 percent of rural women who are in the labor force are full-time workers. Urban women and men are slightly more likely to have full-time jobs.

Labor Force Participation for Pennsylvanians 15 Years and Older

	Female	Male
In the labor force **(Rural)**	55.0%	68.9%
In the labor force **(Urban)**	57.8%	70.5%

EMPLOYMENT

The employment rates for urban women and men are slightly higher than the rates for their rural counterparts. Rural men are more likely to be unemployed than are rural women. While the percentage of rural women that are self-employed is small (3.3 percent), a substantial number of businesses are owned by women. This is particularly true in rural counties close to large metropolitan areas.

Class of Worker for Pennsylvania's Labor Force

Rural	Female	Male
Private	79.2%	84.9%
Public-Federal	2.2	2.4
Public-State	4.5	2.9
Public-Local	10.8	3.4
Self-employed	3.3	5.9
Without pay	<0.1	0.5
Urban		
Private	84.1	80.7
Public-Federal	1.5	2.4
Public-State	2.5	2.3
Public-Local	7.2	5.8
Self-employed	4.4	8.5
Without pay	0.3	0.3

OCCUPATIONS

Administrative support (including clerical) and service jobs are the most common types of occupations in which rural women work. More urban workers are in executive, managerial, and professional specialty jobs.

Occupations for Pennsylvania's Labor Force

	Female	Male
Rural		
Executive, administrative, and management	5.6%	10.2%
Professional speciality, technicians & related fields	18.1	12.6
Sales	8.1	7.0
Administrative support (clerical)	27.3	4.2
Services	24.3	13.6
Production, repair, transportation, assemblers, operators, equipment cleaners, laborers	16.2	49.4
Armed Forces	<0.1	1.3
Farming, fishing, forestry	0.5	2.6
Urban		
Executive, administrative, and management	12.7	15.3
Professional speciality, technicians & related fields	20.4	15.3
Sales	13.2	10.6
Administrative support (clerical)	25.3	5.6
Services	20.2	11.4
Production, repair, transportation, assemblers, operators, equipment cleaners, laborers	10.9	39.3
Armed Forces	<0.1	<0.1
Farming, fishing, forestry	0.6	2.4

INDUSTRIES

About 49 percent of rural women work in service industries. Another 20 percent work in wholesale or retail trade and 15.6 percent work in manufacturing. As for rural men, 44 percent work in the manufacturing industry. More than 45 percent of urban women are employed in service industries as are 20 percent of urban men. More than 20 percent of urban women and men are employed in wholesale and retail trade. Manufacturing employs about 13 percent of urban women.

Industries for Pennsylvania's Labor Force

	Female	Male
Rural		
Agriculture	0.5%	2.2%
Mining and forestry	<0.1	1.6
Manufacturing	15.6	43.9
Transport, communication,& utilities	2.5	8.4
Wholesale & retail trade	20.0	16.1
Finance, insurance & real estate	5.8	2.4
Services	43.5	14.1
Public administration	2.1	2.7
Urban		
Agriculture	0.8	1.7
Mining and forestry	<0.1	0.5
Manufacturing	12.8	31.4
Transport, communication, & utilities	3.9	8.6
Wholesale & retail trade	21.6	22.1
Finance, insurance & real estate	9.2	3.8
Services	36.4	16.4
Public administration	3.3	3.8

CHILD CARE

The ratio of children 4 years old and younger to available day care facilities and licensed homes indicates that, in many rural counties, women's entrance into the labor force could be constrained by the lack of day care.

Main Reasons for Not Working

	Female	Male
Rural		
Illness/disability	7.8%	18.7%
Retired	47.6	55.3
Home/family care	32.8	3.0
Couldn't find work	<0.1	9.4
School	11.7	20.1
Other	<0.1	1.2
Urban		
Illness/disability	15.0	23.5
Retired	38.9	44.3
Home/family care	29.1	2.3
Couldn't find work	1.5	23.5
School	13.8	21.1
Other	1.8	0.7

INCOME

Seventy-five percent of rural women report that wages and salary are a source of family income, and more than 30 percent report that the family receives social security income. Rural men are more likely to report income from wages and salary and less likely to report income from social security.

POVERTY

Rural women are much more likely than any other group to live in a household with an income of less than twice the poverty threshold. About 13 percent of rural women live in poverty. An additional 16 percent have incomes that are less than 50 percent higher than the poverty threshold.

Annual Family Income Relative to Poverty Threshold for Pennsylvanians 15 Years and Older

	Female	Male
Rural		
Less than .5 times	5.0%	2.9%
.5 - .99 times	8.4	8.1
1.0 – 2.99 times	49.2	43.6
3.0 times or more	34.5	45.4
Urban		
Less than .5 times	5.1	3.7
.5 - .99 times	8.9	5.1
1.0 – 2.99 times	37.5	34.9
3.0 times or more	48.5	56.3

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is greater among urban women and men. About 51 percent of rural women are high school graduates, and more than 25 percent go on to obtain some postsecondary education. Rural men are less likely to complete high school than rural women.

Educational Attainment for Pennsylvanians 15 Years and Older

	Female	Male
Rural		
Less than High School	21.9%	30.3%
High School graduate only	51.4	44.3
Some college	9.3	8.0
Associates degree	4.5	6.0
Bachelors degree	8.4	7.8
Graduate or professional degree	4.6	3.6
Urban		
Less than High School	21.7	23.3
High School graduate only	39.9	35.1
Some college	13.9	14.1
Associates degree	5.9	4.7
Bachelors degree	13.6	14.9
Graduate or professional degree	5.0	7.9

POST HIGH SCHOOL PLANS

Urban men and women are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to go on to college. About 65 percent of rural graduating seniors plan to continue their education, compared to about 74 percent of urban students. Overall, 72.2 percent of female students report their intentions to enroll in a postsecondary school, compared to 58.3 percent of male students.

Percent of Pennsylvania High School Seniors Planning to Attend a Postsecondary School

	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Plan to continue	72.2%	58.3%	77.8%	65.9%

BIRTH AND DEATH RATES

Birth rates are somewhat lower in rural counties, reflecting the older age structure. The age-adjusted death rates for rural women are lower than for any other group.

Average Annual Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Pennsylvania

	Female	Male
Rural		
Deaths per 1,000 population	3.69	6.05
Urban		
Deaths per 1,000 population	3.86	6.08

HEALTH

Breast cancer rates are somewhat lower for women living in rural counties. There are several rural counties in which access to specialized health care is limited, as the ratio of women to specialists is very large.

CRIME

Women, particularly rural women, are much less likely to be arrested for a crime than men. Rural counties that are not close to urban areas experience fewer offenses involving families and children.

Definitions and Data Sources

For the research project, rural counties were defined as those counties in which 50 percent or more of the population lives in municipalities of under 2,500 people outside an urbanized area. Whenever possible, this definition was used.

In some instances, however, data availability required the use of the U.S. Census Bureau's classification of counties as metropolitan and nonmetropolitan. Metropolitan counties are those that have an urban concentration of 50,000 or more, regardless of the proportion of county residents that live in rural areas, with remaining counties classified as nonmetropolitan.

In addition to the U.S. Census Bureau, the data described in the report were provided by numerous sources, including the Pennsylvania Departments of Health, Education, and Public Welfare; the Pennsylvania State Data Center; and the Pennsylvania State Police.

Much of the information about women and their families was drawn from the Current Population Survey, a survey conducted regularly by the U.S. Census Bureau to describe the employment characteristics of U.S. workers, as well as other characteristics relevant to family well-being.

Pennsylvania State Data Center is the source for the pie chart and population projections table on page 2.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 1996, 97, 98 is the source for the tables on pages 2, 3, & 4.

PA Department of Education, 1996-97 is the source for the Percent of Pennsylvania High School Seniors Planning to Attend a Postsecondary School table on page 5.

PA Department of Health, 1993-97 is the source for the Average Annual Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Pennsylvania table on page 5.

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The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities. The Center seeks to preserve and enhance the rural environment, which makes the Commonwealth a unique place to live, work, or visit; awards grants for applied research and model projects; maintains and disseminates information on rural trends and conditions; develops publications to share research and project results; and sponsors local, state and national forums on rural issues.

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